DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 102 CS 511 274

TITLE	Evaluation of the Reading First Program. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Georgia State Dept. of Education, Atlanta. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.
PUB DATE	2001-11-00
NOTE	57p.; Produced by the Office of Student Learning and Achievement of the Research, Evaluation and Testing Division. Appendixes C, D, and E are not available from ERIC.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Financial Support; Parent Participation; Primary Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Reading Achievement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; Reading Skills; Student Evaluation; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Georgia; Reading First

ABSTRACT

As part of the final year evaluation of the Reading First Program, the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) continued to follow the achievement of the original group of Reading First schools during the 2000-2001 school year. The final evaluation focuses primarily on the Reading First program's effect on students' reading achievement. Information comparing the Reading First program to other reading initiatives is also provided. The achievement data confirm that the program has its greatest effect on first grade students and low achievers. The data also showed that Reading First and non Reading First teachers shared similar philosophies toward teaching reading and employed similar instructional practices in the classroom. In terms of achievement, scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), Stanford Achievement Test Level 9 (SAT-9), and the Criterion-Referenced Competency Scores (CRCT) all improved. Recommendations center on: funding; student assessment; better continuity across the curriculum; staff development; and parent involvement. The following items are appended: (1) Program Guidelines; (2) Survey Instruments and Discussion Group Protocols; (3) ITBS Scores, 1998-2001; (4) CRCT Scores for Reading First Schools; and (5) SAT-9 Scores for the Reading First and Non-Reading First Comparison Sample. (Contains 7 tables and 13 charts.) (PM)

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Evaluation of the Reading First Program
Final Report

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Executive Summary

As part of the final year evaluation of the Reading First program, the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) continued to follow the achievement of the original group of Reading First schools (those that implemented the program during the 1998-99 school year) during the 2000-2001 school year. The final evaluation focuses primarily on the Reading First program's effect on students' reading achievement. Information comparing the Reading First program to other reading initiatives is also provided.

The results from the final evaluation provide additional support for the year one and year two evaluation findings. The achievement data confirm that the Reading First program has its greatest effect on first grade students and low achievers.

The data also showed that Reading First and non Reading First teachers shared similar philosophies toward teaching reading and employed similar instructional practices in the classroom. Although teachers and administrators at both Reading First and non Reading First schools felt that parental involvement was low, Reading First and non Reading First parents indicated that they engaged in similar reading related activities with their children and participated in school activities at approximately the same rate.

In terms of achievement, the major findings are listed below.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) Results

- The average second grade reading vocabulary and comprehension ITBS scores consistently improved from 1998 to 2001.
- The percentage of Reading First students scoring at or below the 25th percentile on the vocabulary and comprehension sub-tests continually decreased in grades one, two and three from 1998 to 2001.
- The percentage of first grade Reading First students scoring at or above the 75th percentile on the reading vocabulary and comprehension sub-tests continually increased from 1998 to 2001.
- The percentage of second grade students scoring at or above the 75th percentile in vocabulary and comprehension increased from 2000 to 2001.
- The percentage of third grade students scoring at or above the 75th percentile in reading comprehension continually increased from 1999 to 2001.
- The percentage of third grade students scoring at or above the 75th percentile in reading vocabulary increased from 2000 to 2001.

Stanford-9 (SAT-9) Results

- Reading First students scored higher on the reading vocabulary and comprehension portions of the SAT-9 in 2001 when compared to a sample of their non Reading First peers.

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- When compared to a sample of non Reading First students, fewer Reading First students scored at or below the 25th percentile in both vocabulary and comprehension on the SAT-9.

Criterion-Referenced Competency Scores (CRCT)

- Fourth grade Reading First students improved their Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) reading performance in 2001 when compared to 2000.
- The percentage of Reading First students not meeting the standard on the CRCT decreased by 10-percentage points in 2001.
- There was a 10-percentage point gain in the number of Reading First students meeting or exceeding the standard in 2001 when compared to 2000.
- Of the 302 Reading First schools with two years of CRCT data, 83 percent showed increases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard.

As a result of this evaluation, several recommendations for continued improvement of Reading First and reading, in general, were made. The recommendations center mainly on funding, student assessment, better continuity across the curriculum, staff development, and parent involvement. The data from the final evaluation of the Reading First program provides support for its continued use, particularly with early elementary and low performing students.

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Part I: Overview

In the fall of 1998, the Georgia Department of Education began a statewide evaluation of the effectiveness of the Reading First program. The evaluation included all 351 elementary schools that implemented the program during the 1998 school year. The three evaluation questions are presented below:

- How, specifically, is Reading First being implemented in Georgia?
- To what extent does Reading First affect student's academic success?
- How are the effects of Reading First influenced by the type of reading program and materials used by individual schools and the extent/level of implementation of the original program?

The purpose of Georgia's Reading First program is to increase reading achievement among all students in grades K through three by focusing reading instruction on the following: 1) quality literature, 2) direct, systematic phonics, 3) high frequency sight vocabulary, and 4) reading comprehension strategies in the content areas of science and social studies (see Appendix A for a complete copy of the program guidelines).

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to provide information that program stakeholders could use for decision-making regarding program policies and program improvement. The evaluation design consisted of a three-year longitudinal study in which the academic achievement of Reading First students and the extent to which the program was properly implemented at the participating elementary schools was assessed each year to determine the program's effectiveness. It is important to note that while the original sample had 351 Reading First schools, during the second year of the program, 24 schools elected to discontinue the program. During the 2000-01 school year, an additional 19 schools discontinued the program, therefore, the statewide evaluation includes only those schools that continued the program for the full three years.

The first evaluation question was the primary focus of the year one evaluation. The most important findings from that study were:

- Reading First students in grades K through three scored higher on the vocabulary and comprehension portions of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) than students who attended the same schools the year before the program was implemented.
- The Reading First program has the greatest effect on student achievement for first graders and low performing second and third grade students.
- Many schools were not able to fully implement the program at the beginning of the 1998 school year.

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The second year evaluation focused, for the most part, on addressing the second and third evaluation questions. The data from that study yielded results that supported the findings of the year one evaluation. Some of the most important findings were:

- The proportion of Reading First students scoring at or below the 25th percentile continuously decreased over the two-year period in both vocabulary and comprehension at all grade levels.
- The proportion of Reading First students in first grade scoring at or above the 75th percentile in both vocabulary and comprehension increased from 1998 to 2000.
- The proportion of second grade Reading First students scoring at or above the 75th percentile in vocabulary increased from 1998-2000.
- The average first, second and third grade ITBS scores at Reading First schools have improved in both comprehension and vocabulary from 1998-2000.
- Although their overall ITBS scores were lower, third grade Reading First students showed greater gains in vocabulary and comprehension over the two-year period than the state of Georgia as a whole.
- By the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, the Reading First program was fully implemented.

The main focus of this final evaluation report is the second evaluation question: "To what extent does Reading First affect student's academic success?" Having sufficiently addressed implementation issues during the year one and two evaluations, this report examines longitudinal effects of the program, and compares the reading achievement of Reading First students with their peers attending non Reading First schools. The extent to which the different types of materials used as part of the Reading First program impact achievement and vary by implementation was addressed in the year two evaluation report. Prescriptive information about the use of Reading First and other reading programs throughout the state of Georgia was collected through discussion groups with Reading First and non Reading First teachers and administrators, and through the use of surveys with the aforementioned groups as well as elementary school parents. This information is used in this report to place achievement in the context of program implementation.

Methodology

The data collected as part of this evaluation came from multiple sources: discussion groups with program administrators and teachers of Reading First and non Reading First schools; surveys of Reading First and non Reading First teachers and parents; and achievement data from a variety of sources.

The discussion groups were conducted by staff from the Occupational Research Group at the University of Georgia. The discussion groups included two groups of program stakeholders: teachers and administrators for a total of 180 participants representing 16 school districts and one Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA).

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Surveys were administered through the Research, Evaluation and Testing Division of the Georgia Department of Education to approximately 7,000 teachers and 3,000 parents at a sample of Reading First and non Reading First schools in the spring of 2001. The purpose of the surveys was to uncover differences and similarities in instructional practices, teaching philosophies, and parental involvement between the two groups.

The achievement data used in the present study came from multiple sources. Riverside Publishing Company provided Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores for all students participating in the Reading First program. Four years worth of ITBS scores were available for Reading First students (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001). Harcourt Educational Measurement, Inc. provided third grade Stanford-9 (SAT-9) reading scores. These scores were examined to compare achievement between a sample of Reading First and non Reading First schools. Finally, Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) reading scores were used to compare the achievement of fourth grade students who participated in the Reading First program for one or two years.

A triangulation of data collection methods was used to provide GDOE with data from multiple sources that are mutually supportive. This technique adds more credibility and confidence to the study. A detailed description of discussion groups protocols and the survey instruments are provided in Appendix B.

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Part II: Student Academic Achievement

The main purpose of this final evaluation report is to examine the extent to which participating in the Reading First program has effected students' reading achievement over the last three years. In order to do so, several sources of achievement data are analyzed and presented in this section of the report. First, the reading comprehension and vocabulary Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores for Reading First students are examined. The ITBS has been administered each spring to all Reading First students as a requirement of the program. ITBS data, therefore, are available for a four-year period that began in 1998 (the year before the program was implemented) and ended in 2001, and will be used to examine the longitudinal effects of the program on student achievement. Second, the reading portion of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) is used to compare the performance of fourth grade students who participated in the Reading First program for one or two years. Finally, scores on the reading section of the Stanford-9 (SAT-9) for a sample of Reading First and non Reading First schools are examined to determine whether there are significant differences in achievement.

Demographic Characteristics of Reading First Schools

Demographic information on the schools participating in the Reading First program has not been available in time for use in previous evaluations. This information is typically obtained from the State Student Information System and includes information about eligibility for free and/or reduced lunch (a proxy for socio-economic status), participation in other compensatory educational programs (i.e.; Title I, remedial education, special education) and ethnicity. Since this is the final evaluation of the Reading First program, it is important to describe the demographic characteristics of participating schools and, where possible, discuss the implications of specific demographic characteristics on achievement. It is important to note, however, that the demographic information presented in this report was obtained from the 2000 database and the demographic make-up of Reading First schools may have changed during 2001. Furthermore, individual information was not available for Reading First students, therefore, only school-level demographic data are presented.

Chart 1 shows the percentage of Reading First students in each of the three largest ethnic groups: White, African American and Hispanic. As shown, nearly one-half of the students attending Reading First schools are African American (48%) while the remaining majority of students are White (46%). A small percentage (4%) of students attending Reading First schools are Hispanic, and the remaining two percent of Reading First Schools are made up of students of other ethnic backgrounds.

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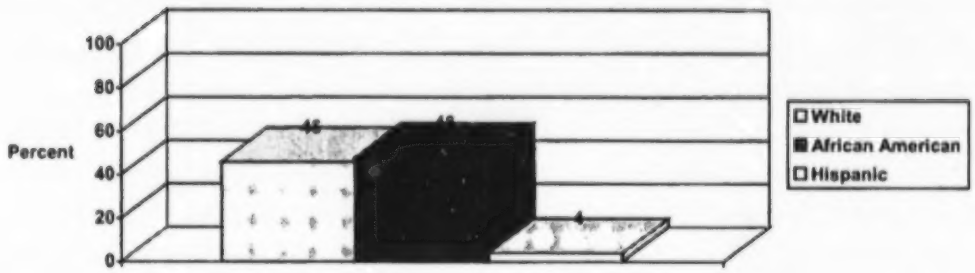
Chart 1. Ethnic Breakdown of Reading First Schools



Charts 2, 3, and 4 show the percentage of Reading First schools that participate in the Title I program, percentage of students eligible for free and/or reduced price lunch, and the percentage of students enrolled in compensatory programs such as remedial and special education.

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Chart 2. Percentage of Reading First Schools with Title I

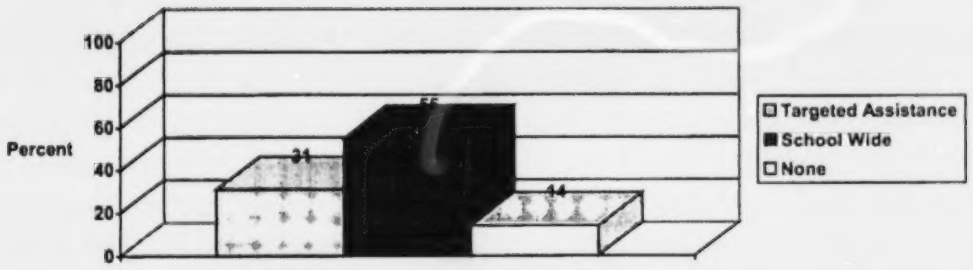

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Chart 3. Percentage of Students Attending Reading First Schools Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch

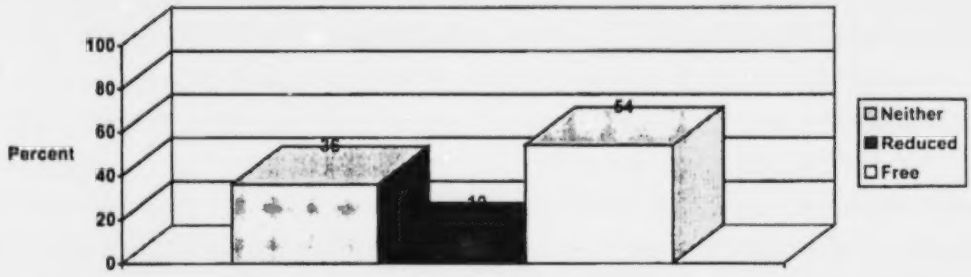

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Chart 4. Percentage of Students Attending Reading First Schools Participating in Compensatory Education Programs

The data in Chart 2 show that the majority of Reading First schools (86%) have either the targeted assistance or school-wide Title I programs in place. In addition, Chart 3 shows that a large percentage of students attending Reading First schools (64%) are eligible for either free or reduced priced lunch. With free or reduced lunch eligibility being the most appropriate indicator of socio-economic status available, these data suggest that over one-half of the students attending Reading First schools are from lower income families. Finally, Chart 4 shows that 12% of students attending Reading First Schools are enrolled in special and remedial education programs.

Based on the demographic information that is available, the Reading First program appears to be implemented in schools with high levels of need. This evaluation can not, however, explore the extent to which these demographic factors impact individual student achievement.

Academic Achievement and ITBS

This section of the report contains several analyses of ITBS data. First, the average vocabulary and comprehension national percentile rank (NPR) scores of first, second and third graders at Reading First schools are compared for 1998 (pre-implemenation), 1999 (year one), 2000 (year two) and 2001 (year three). Next, differences in the proportion of low and high performing Reading First students over the three year period is assessed by comparing the percentage of students in lower and upper quartiles (under the 25th and over the 75th percentiles). Finally, a longitudinal analysis which examines the

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performance of Reading First students over the three year period is presented. The school level ITBS scores for Reading First schools over the four year period (1998-2001) are contained in Appendix C.

Comparison of Pre and Post ITBS Scores by Grade. The first analysis presented answers the question: "Do Reading First students perform better or worse than students who attended the same schools in the previous three years?" The purpose of this kind of cross-sectional analysis is to determine whether implementation of the Reading First program has had a school wide effect. In other words, do first grade students in 2001 perform better than their same grade peers did in 1998, 1999 and 2000? Although in 2001, first graders have only participated in the program for one year (beginning in kindergarten), they are attending schools where the program has been in place for three years. If implementing the Reading First program has improved reading instruction, it is likely that the overall performance of students in 2001, regardless of their individual length of program participation, would be better when compared to their peers who attended the schools before the program was implemented or when the program had been in place for a shorter period of time. The average first, second, and third grade vocabulary and comprehension percentile scores from 1998 to 2001 are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. National Percentile Rank Scores for Reading First Schools by Grade, 1998-2001

	1998	1999	2000	2001
1st Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	48	53	57	57
Reading Comprehension	55	59	63	63
2nd Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	44	46	48	50
Reading Comprehension	50	52	54	56
3rd Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	38	40	40	38
Reading Comprehension	41	41	43	41

The data show mixed results. In first grade, the average vocabulary and comprehension scores did not change from 2000 to 2001. These scores, however, are higher than they were in both 1998 and 1999, pre-implementation and year one of the program. It is possible that by 2001, the Reading First program was securely in place and the kind of

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improvement that marked the first two years of implementation, stabilized by year three for first grade students. On the other hand, second grade Reading First students consistently improved their reading achievement from 1998 to 2001 by two percentile points in both vocabulary and comprehension. In third grade, where achievement has been sporadic over the duration of the program, vocabulary and comprehension scores decreased in 2001, and are consistent with third grade performance in 1998, before the program was in place. Data from the previous two evaluations have indicated that the instruction in third grade needed to become more rigorous for average and high achieving third grade students. A comprehension module was designed to provide this rigor and was implemented as part of the Reading First program during the 2000-01 school year. It is possible that one year of implementation was not long enough to see the effects of more rigorous instruction at grade three, therefore, third grade Reading First students did not show improved performance. In addition, introducing a new program component (i.e., the comprehension module) could by itself cause the drop-off in scores as teachers get used to the new instructional practice.

Achievement Comparisons by Quartile. The previous section assessed differences in ITBS performance for each grade level over the three year period at Reading First schools. The following analysis examines whether the percentage of low and high performing students has changed since the beginning of the Reading First program. The purpose of this type of analysis is to determine whether the proportion of low performing students had decreased since the inception of the Reading First program. If the program is having its intended effect, it could be assumed that the percentage of students with poor reading achievement should decrease while the percentage of high performing students should increase. In order to establish the proportion of low and high performing students, ITBS data were used to determine how many students scored below the 25th percentile (lower quartile) or above the 75th percentile (upper quartile) in comprehension or vocabulary from 1998-2001. Charts 5 and 6 and Table 2 contain these data.

Chart 5. Percentage of Reading First Students Scoring At or Below the 25th Percentile by Grade, 1998-2001

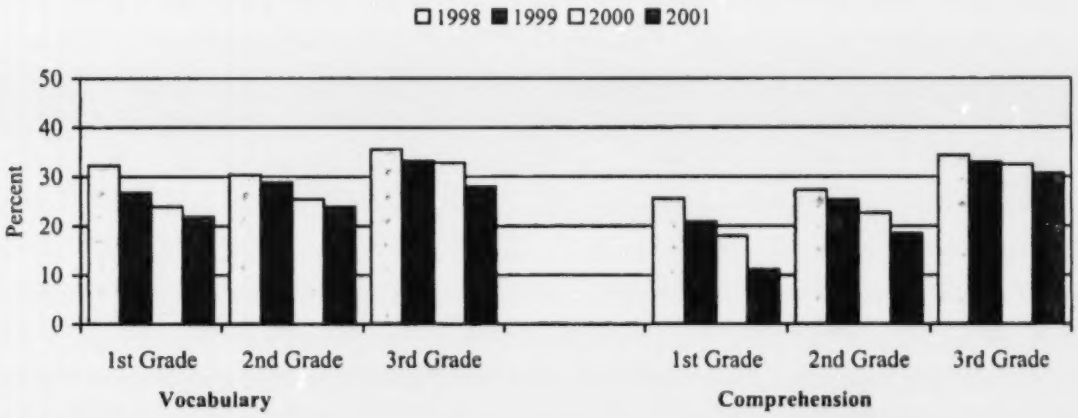

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Chart 6. Percentage of Reading First Students Scoring At or Above the 75th Percentile by Grade, 1998-2001

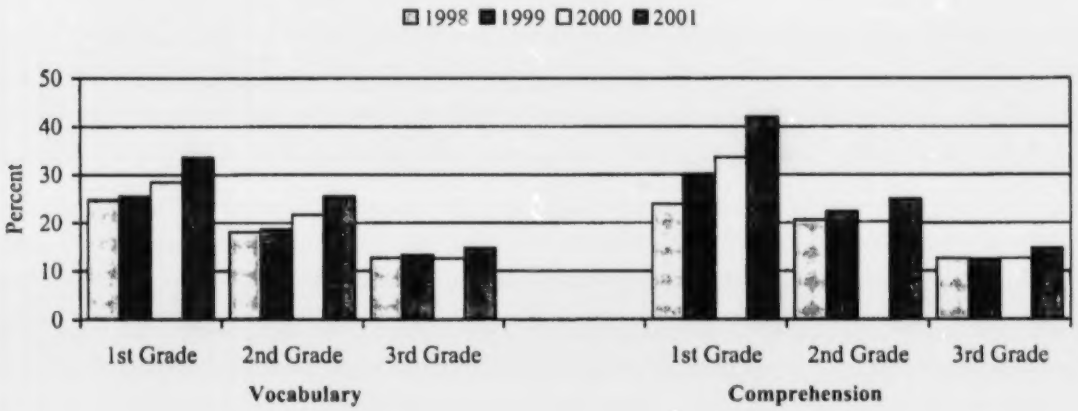

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Table 2. Percentage of Reading First Students Scoring At or Below the 25th Percentile and At or Above the 75th Percentile by Grade, 1998-2001

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Low Achieving Students (At or Below the 25th Percentile)				
1st Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	32.3	26.7	23.9	21.9
Reading Comprehension	25.6	20.9	18.0	11.2
2nd Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	30.4	28.9	25.4	23.9
Reading Comprehension	27.3	25.3	22.7	18.5
3rd Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	35.6	33.2	32.8	28.0
Reading Comprehension	34.3	32.9	32.4	30.7
High Achieving Students (At or Above the 75th Percentile)				
1st Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	24.7	25.5	28.4	33.6
Reading Comprehension	23.9	30.1	33.6	42.0
2nd Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	18.1	18.6	21.7	25.5
Reading Comprehension	20.6	22.4	20.2	25.0
3rd Grade				
Reading Vocabulary	12.8	13.4	12.6	15.8
Reading Comprehension	12.7	12.5	12.7	14.8

The data show a consistent pattern of improvement at all three grade levels in the percentage of low performing Reading First students (at or below the 25th percentile). Since 1998, there have been fewer students scoring in the lower quartile in vocabulary and comprehension each year. This suggests that the Reading First program is meeting its intended goal of providing students with reading skills that improve their reading achievement. These data also support the finding that the Reading First program has its biggest effect on low performing students.

A somewhat similar pattern exists when comparing the percentage of students scoring at or above the 75th percentile. In first grade, there has continuously been more students scoring at or above the 75th percentile since 1998. Again, the data support the finding that the Reading First program provides the greatest benefit to first grade students. In grade two, there has been consistent improvement in vocabulary but mixed comprehension results. While there was an increase in the percentage of students scoring at or above the

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75th percentile in comprehension from 2000 to 2001, there was a decrease from 1999 to 2000. This same pattern exists in third grade vocabulary scores. More students scored at or above the 75th percentile from 2000 to 2001, while there was a decrease from 1999 to 2000, in vocabulary. In comprehension, scores increased consistently from 1999 to 2001, however, the data show a slight decrease from 1998 to 1999.

Overall, the data presented support the findings of the previous two evaluations. Reading First appears to have the biggest impact on first grade reading achievement and the reading achievement of low performing second and third grade students. There are mixed results among high performing second and third grade students. While the proportion of high performers increased in first grade in 2001, the percentages fluctuated in second and third grade during previous years.

Longitudinal Analysis of Reading First Students' Achievement. In the following analyses, the ITBS performance of students who have participated in the Reading First program for the full three years (1999, 2000 and 2001) are examined. These students were in first grade during the first year of implementation and in kindergarten in 1998, the year in which pre-implementation ITBS data were collected. Kindergarten students are not required to take the ITBS as part of the program, therefore, pre-implementation data are not available for this cohort of students. Table 3 below shows the percentage of students whose individual ITBS reading vocabulary and comprehension scores increased over the three-year period. These data address the question: "Has the achievement of students who have participated in Reading First for the full duration of the program consistently increased?" The table below contains the percentage of students whose scores increased from year one to year three (1999 to 2001) and, year two to year three (from 2000 to 2001).

Table 3. Percentage of Reading First Students With Increased Comprehension and Vocabulary ITBS Scores, 1999-2001

	1999-2001	2000-2001
Reading Vocabulary	70.5%	65.1%
Reading Comprehension	80.2%	62.8%

The data show that students made the greatest gains in achievement when vocabulary and comprehension scores were examined from year one (1999) to year three (2001). The vast majority of students (70.5 and 80.2 percent) had higher scores in vocabulary and comprehension respectively from 1999 to 2001. Likewise, more than half of the students who participated in Reading First for three years had higher vocabulary and comprehension scores when 2000 ITBS data are compared to 2001. It is important to point out that in year one of the program (1999), implementation was poor, therefore, large gains in achievement would be expected from 1999 to 2001 which compares little or no implementation to two years of full implementation. The fact that scores also increased from 2000 to 2001 (year two to year three) when the program was fully implemented in the Reading First schools is even more important. These data show, for example, that while 70.5% of schools increased their vocabulary scores from 1999 to

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2001, 65.1% of this increase may have occurred during year two of the program (2000 to 2001). This suggests that achievement has improved as a result of properly implementing the Reading First program.

Criterion-Referenced Competency Scores for Reading First Schools. During the 1999-2000 school year, the GDOE began administering the CRCT to students in grades four, six, and eight. The CRCT is closely aligned to the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) and, therefore, is an appropriate indicator of student performance in each of its content areas. This section of the evaluation examines the reading performance of fourth grade students who attended Reading First schools using the CRCT. Even though the Reading First program serves students in grades K through three, the CRCT can be used as a means to assess the long term effectiveness of the program. The data presented here compare the performance of students who attended Reading First schools during the first and second years of implementation. In other words, the 2000 CRCT scores are for students who were in grade three during the program's first year of implementation (1998-1999) and in grade four during the 2000 administration of the CRCT. Likewise, the 2001 CRCT data are for students who were in grade two during the first year of implementation, and grade three during the second year of Reading First. These students were in fourth grade during the 2001 administration of the CRCT. The purpose of this comparison is to assess the extent to which longer participation in the program (one versus two years) results in higher reading achievement on the CRCT.

Chart 7, which is on the following page, compares the CRCT performance levels (does not meet the standard, meets the standard, exceeds the standard) of fourth graders at Reading First schools. These data show that when compared to 2000, fourth graders improved their reading performance in 2001. More specifically, the percentage of low performing students (those not meeting the standard) decreased by 10-percentage points in 2001. Conversely, there was also a 10-percentage point gain in the number of students meeting or exceeding the standard in 2001 when compared to 2000. Again, these data are consistent with previous findings that indicate that the Reading First program was not fully implemented during year one (1998-1999) and has had little effect on third grade students. However, students with two years of participation (second and third grades) had better performance on the CRCT.

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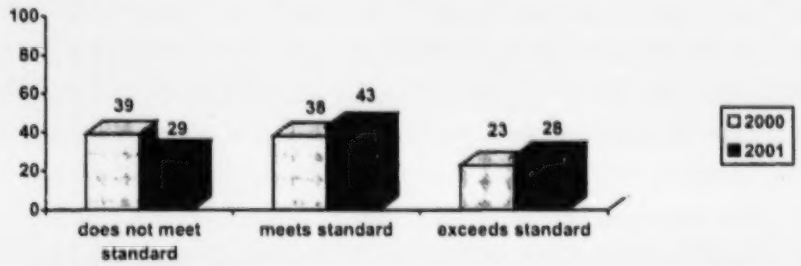
Chart 7. Percentage of Fourth Grade Reading First Students Scoring at Each Performance Level



Even more importantly, of the 302 Reading First schools that serve fourth grade and have 2 years of CRCT data, 83 percent showed increases in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard from 2000 to 2001. The analyses presented here show that students who attended Reading First schools in second and third grade performed better on the CRCT than those who attended Reading First schools for third grade only. The individual CRCT scores for Reading First schools are provided in Appendix D.

Stanford-9 Scores for Reading First and Non Reading First Schools. In the spring of 2001, the Stanford-9 (SAT-9) norm-referenced test was administered to students in grades three, five, and eight for the first time as part of the state's testing program. The SAT-9 replaced the ITBS that had been in use in previous years. This section of the evaluation presents third grade reading SAT-9 scores for a comparable sample of Reading First and non Reading First schools (n=200). The sample was selected and matched based on the following criteria: 1) achievement using their 2000 reading comprehension ITBS scores, and 2) socio-economic status using the percentage of students eligible for free and/or reduced lunch. The purpose of this section of the report is to compare the reading achievement of students attending Reading First and non Reading First schools. This sections answers the question: "Do Reading First students perform better or worse than their peers enrolled at schools with similar demographics where a different reading initiative is in place?"

Several analyses are presented here. First, 2001 vocabulary and comprehension SAT-9 scores for the sample are compared. Next, a comparison of the proportion of Reading First and non Reading First students scoring in the upper and lower quartiles of the SAT-9 is made. Finally, the percentage of Reading First and Non Reading First schools whose scores have improved from 2000 to 2001 is presented. The data used for this analysis is the 2000 ITBS and 2001 equated Stanford-9 scores. The equated score, as provided by Harcourt Educational Measurement, estimates what Georgia's student percentile ranking scores would have been had students taken the ITBS instead of the Stanford 9.

Chart 8 shows the 2001 SAT-9 reading vocabulary and comprehension percentile scores for the sample of Reading First and non Reading First students. The data indicate that

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there is a slight difference in reading achievement between the two groups. Reading First students had higher vocabulary and comprehension scores (1 percentile point) than their non Reading First peers.

Chart 8. Comparison of 2001 SAT-9 Scores for Reading First and Non Reading First Students

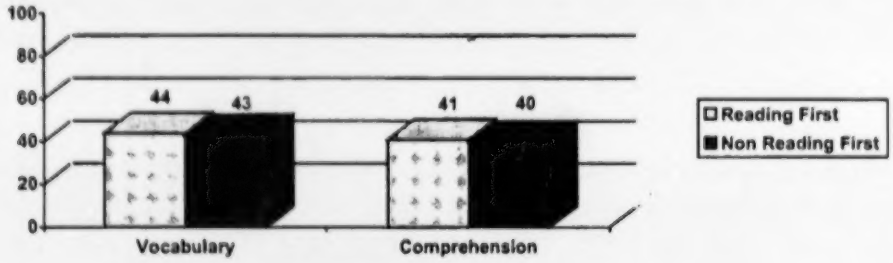

Table 4 contains the percentage of Reading First and non Reading First students scoring in the lower and upper quartiles (at or below the 25th percentile and at or above the 75th percentile) on the SAT-9. The purpose of this comparison is to assess whether there are differences in the proportion of low and high achieving students between the two groups. The data show that in both content areas, there were fewer Reading First students scoring at or below the 25th percentile than non Reading First students. However, more non Reading First students scored at or above the 75th percentile than Reading First students. In other words, these data suggest that there are fewer low performing third grade Reading First students than non Reading First students. Additionally, non Reading First schools had more high performing students (at or above the 75th percentile) than Reading First schools. These data are consistent with the finding that Reading First is effective with low performing third grade students. This finding also lends support to the previous evaluation recommendation which suggested that the Reading First program needed to become more rigorous, particularly for average and high performing second and third graders.

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Table 4. Percentage of Third Grade Reading First and Non Reading First Students Scoring At or Below the 25th Percentile and At or Above the 75th Percentile, 2001

	Vocabulary	Comprehension
Low Achieving Students (At or Below the 25th Percentile)		
Reading First	26.8%	32.7%
Non Reading First	30.4%	35.7%
High Achieving Students (At or Above the 75th Percentile)		
Reading First	14.9%	18.6%
Non Reading First	16.2%	20.5%

The last comparison using the SAT-9 answers the question: "Have Reading First schools shown greater overall improvement in reading when compared to their non Reading First peers?" Using the reading comprehension ITBS (2000) and SAT-9 equated scores (2001), the percentage of Reading First and non Reading First schools that had increased third grade scores was calculated and is presented in Table 5. These data show that more Reading First schools increased their reading comprehension scores than their non Reading First peers. Appendix E contains the SAT-9 scores and selection criteria for the sample of Reading First and non Reading First schools.

Table 5. Percentage of Reading First and Non Reading First Schools With Increased Third Grade Reading Comprehension Scores, 2000-2001

	Reading Comprehension
Reading First	47%
Non Reading First	41%

Summary on Achievement

Overall, the achievement data presented support the findings from the year one and year two evaluations. The data show that the Reading First program benefits first grade students and low achieving second and third grade students. While the Reading First program was revised to provide more rigorous third grade instruction, the effects of the new comprehension module are not apparent. Like the Reading First program itself, the comprehension module may take more than one year to fully implement or measure.

This section of the report focused on the academic achievement of Reading First students. The data support previous evaluations and the continued use of the Reading First program. The type of instruction required as part of the program clearly benefits first grade students. Even though the effects of the new component (comprehension module) on second and third grade students are not clear, it is important to continue examining ways to provide better instruction and to fully impact the targeted student population.

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Part III: Program Implementation and Achievement

The last section of this report focused specifically on the reading achievement, as measured by the ITBS, SAT-9 and CRCT scores of Reading First students. This section of the report examines reading achievement within the context of program implementation – what teachers and administrators did in schools that might account for student performance. The data presented in this section were obtained through discussion groups and surveys with Reading First and non Reading First teachers and administrators, as well as surveys with Reading First and non Reading parents. Copies of the discussion group protocols and survey instruments can be found in Appendix B. The full text of the discussion group report will be made available upon request.

This section contains the following sub-sections:

- Philosophy of Teaching Reading
- Reasons for Implementing Reading First or Other Reading Programs
- Satisfaction with Reading First
- Parental Involvement
- Staff Development
- Indicators of Academic Success
- Changes in Reading First and Other Reading Program Over the Three Year Period.
- Future Plans for Reading
- Recommendations for Improvement

Philosophy towards teaching reading. Participants across all discussion groups (Reading First teachers, non Reading First teachers, and administrators) stressed similar ideas when talking about their philosophy towards teaching reading. Both Reading First and non Reading First teachers shared the view that "*reading is the foundation for all learning and should be the focus of instruction in the primary grades.*" For example, a second grade teacher stated that *"social studies, science, and math should be added to the curriculum only after students have learned to read and comprehend."*

Participants also stated that primary-level teachers must ensure that every child learns to read and encouraged the use of varying instructional practices to do so. For instance, participants agreed that *"all children can learn to read if they are taught in the way they need to be taught."* To that end, teachers felt that they need to be able to accurately assess students' reading skills and provide the necessary intervention strategies. Reading First teachers considered the Basic Literacy Test (BLT) to be an effective tool for diagnosing literacy skills. Most of the teachers also believed that schools must adopt a *"balanced approach" to reading which emphasizes whole language instruction, phonics, and comprehension.* Non Reading First teachers indicated that the reading programs in their schools incorporated different approaches to teaching reading including whole language and phonics. Several of the non Reading First schools indicated that they used

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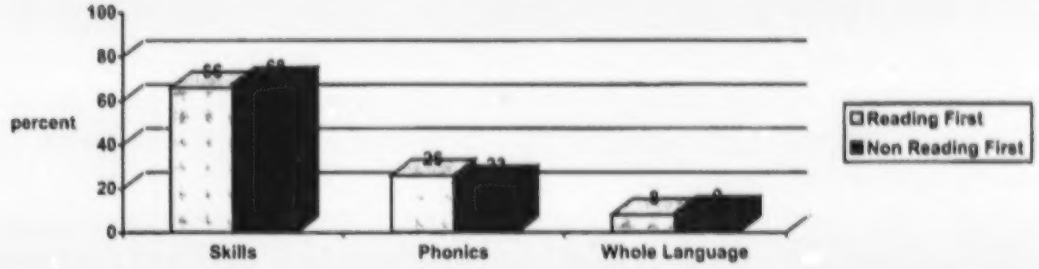
the Reading Recovery, Literacy Collaborative, and Success for All programs in lieu of Reading First.

Teacher's orientation toward teaching reading was examined as part of the teacher survey that was administered to a sample of Reading First and non Reading First teachers in the spring of 2001. The survey, developed by researchers at Ohio State University, is based on the assumption that teachers' reading orientation establishes expectancies and influences goals, procedures, materials and classroom instructional practices. Chart 9 compares the percentage of Reading First and non Reading First teachers whose responses to the survey items were categorized as one of the following three reading orientations: 1) Phonics (isolation of phonemes – emphasis on decoding), 2) Skills (isolation of skills – emphasis on words), and 3) Whole Language (no isolation of skills for practice – emphasis on developing sense of story and text).

Chart 9. Comparison of Reading First and Non Reading First Teachers' Reading Orientation



These data show that both Reading First and non Reading First teachers had a strong orientation towards the provision of skills when teaching reading. Approximately one-quarter of teachers' orientation was towards phonics and an even smaller percentage focused on whole language.

Administrators for both Reading First and non Reading First program shared similar views about teaching reading. Many said that *"teachers must do whatever it takes to help students learn to read."* Administrators indicated that teachers must be willing and able to address "different learning modalities" and to form "appropriate" expectations of their

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students. For example, one administrator said that, *"If we can't teach children at their own level, we are destined for failure."* Administrators also stressed that teachers need to be creative, but cautioned that creativity should be guided by the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC).

Reasons for Selecting Reading First or Other Reading Programs. Teachers and administrators were asked why they chose to implement the Reading First program or other reading programs to meet their student's needs. Many Reading First stakeholders indicated that their schools implemented the Reading First Program because of the *"additional funding"* that the program provided. They saw the additional resources as a way to "level the playing field" with other schools. Given that the demographic data on Reading First schools show that a large percentage have low SES this information is not surprising. Several discussion group participants also stated that *"Reading First was selected because it provides a "solid foundation for reading at the primary level' that can be reinforced in the upper grades."*

Non Reading First personnel provided several reasons why their schools did not participate in the Reading First Program. Some non Reading First staff felt that their schools already had an effective reading program in place. Many participants felt that *"the Reading First program requirements were too restrictive and that Reading First did not provide an adequate focus on writing."* A vast majority of non Reading First staff felt that *"the Reading First program required excessive testing and that the three-hour block of reading instruction that is required was unnecessary."* Several administrators indicated that their schools' test scores were sufficiently high with their existing reading program, and therefore, there was no need to implement something new. Others suggested that Reading First had not been *"proven consistently"* and that the money awarded to implement the program came with *" too many strings attached."*

Non Reading First teachers and administrators that were in favor of the program felt that it would be too difficult to implement without paraprofessionals. Others simply said that they had applied for the grant but were denied.

Satisfaction with the Reading First Program. For the most part, Reading First teachers and administrators agreed that Reading First met or exceeded their expectations. One teacher stated that, *"the state finally realized that in order to teach science and social studies, students need to be able to read first."* Teachers and administrators further agreed that *"the phonics component of Reading First had resulted in earlier literacy among K-2 students."* Some administrators believed the *"amount of teamwork and dedication required to implement Reading First had improved the overall climate of their schools."*

In spite of a consensus that Reading First met or exceeded most expectations, some participants expressed concerns that the BLT was too subjective to reliably and validly assess students' needs. There was also concern that the BLT would be used inappropriately to measure teacher effectiveness instead of students' literacy skills.

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Reading First administrators thought the BLT was an effective tool for assessing student strengths and weaknesses, but expressed concerns that students were being tested too much, that teachers lost too much instructional time meeting testing requirements, and that teachers were not adequately trained to score the BLT. Teachers also commented that Reading First materials were not available initially (as documented in the year one evaluation) because of funding delays at the state and district levels. Several administrators found the state-imposed "letter of assurance" to be professionally insulting.

Reading First and non Reading First alike reported that the greatest strength of any instructional program is the availability of funds and materials that support the programs. For instance, Reading First teachers said that they found the phonics component, the BLT and the continuity of the program across and within grade levels to be valuable assets. Administrators noted that the primary strength of the reading programs were the *"teachers who worked extremely hard and knew the importance of reading instruction in the primary grades."*

Comparisons of Reading First and Other Reading Programs. The Reading First program requires three hours of reading instruction each day. Some schools indicated that they were able to set aside one uninterrupted block of time for Reading First, whereas others had to schedule shorter periods throughout the day. Despite scheduling differences, all teachers reportedly incorporated the required components into their curricula. Many of the non-Reading First teachers reported that their schools had implemented reading programs that contained some of the Reading First components. For example, some non Reading First schools incorporated phonics, small and whole group instruction, and writing into their reading programs. Many non Reading First teachers indicated that they used the BLT to assess students' reading abilities, while others used STAR Assessment, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). Some non Reading First schools also selected well-known reading programs such as Success for All (which is also used at some Reading First schools) and Reading Recovery, while others implemented school-based or teacher-designed programs. One teacher's school reportedly used a *"hodgepodge of reading activities with little or no continuity within or across grade levels"* while others agreed that administrators *"don't really care what we do in the classroom as long as the kids show effort on the reading test."* Participants from all groups reported that most new teachers were not prepared to teach reading, especially phonics.

The survey administered to the sample of Reading First and non Reading First teachers gathered information on the types of instructional practices used in the classrooms and the amount of time spent on components that are central to Reading First and other reading programs. When asked about the goals of their reading programs, more than seventy percent of Reading First and non Reading First teachers agreed that teaching phonics and sight words were central to their reading instruction, while approximately half of teachers indicated that the use of computers to reinforce or manage reading was a major part of their program's goals. Compared to non Reading First teachers, a greater

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percentage of Reading First teachers reported having the three components (phonics, sight words and computers) as part of their program's goals. Chart 10 compares the percentage of Reading First and non Reading First teachers who indicated that the use of phonics, sight words and computers were central to their reading program.

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Chart 10. Percentage of Reading First and Non Reading First Teachers Reporting Phonics, Sight Words and Computer Usage as Program Goals

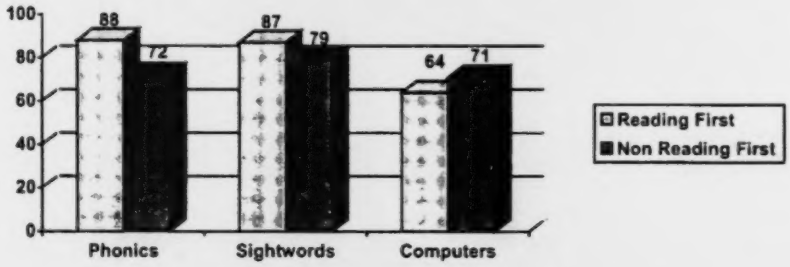

Chart 11 compares the amount of time Reading First and non Reading First teachers spent on each of the following instructional areas: phonics, sight words, small group instruction, computer usage. These data show that there are slight differences between Reading First and non Reading First teachers' classroom practices. Using a scale of one through five (1 = 0-20 minutes, 2 = 21-40 minutes, 3 = 41-60, 4 = more than 80 minutes), the data show that on average, Reading First teachers spend a little more time each day teaching phonics, sight words, using small group instruction and using computers to reinforce and manage reading instruction than non Reading First teachers. For instance, the average score of Reading First teachers was 2.5 for the amount of time spent teaching phonics compared to 2.0 for non Reading First teachers.

Chart 11. Average Score for the Amount of Time Spent on Various Instructional Practices

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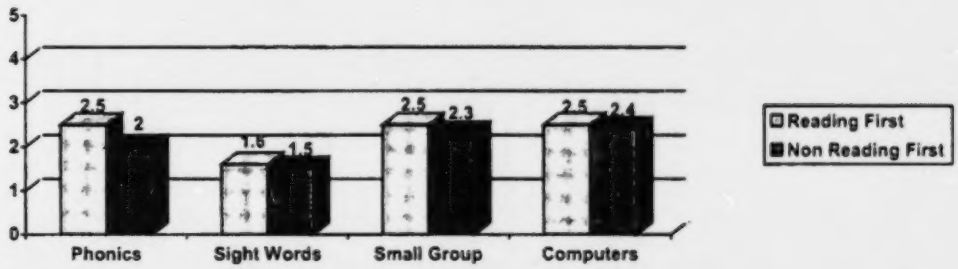

The discussion group data also indicated that computer use varied in both Reading First and non Reading First schools from no use at all to approximately twenty minutes per day, and was largely dependent on availability. Many schools with Reading First or other reading programs used computers to reinforce reading through the Accelerated Reader program. One school used Reading First funds to pilot Breakthrough to Literacy, a program which requires students to spend 20 minutes per day using computers to work on reading. Some of the non Reading First teachers reported that they were required to create web pages and Power Point presentations on the computers and used them minimally for student instruction. Administrators across the groups reported that most schools had computer labs and classroom computers available for use.

Teachers and administrators were asked in the discussion groups how instruction differed by grade level. Reading First and non-Reading First teachers indicated that they focused primarily on phonics and sight words from Pre-K to grade one, and changed the emphasis to comprehension by grades two or three. Both sets of third grade teachers usually focused on grammar and spelling, while teachers in the higher grades tended to focus on "reading to learn" rather than "learning to read." Others added that research skills are also introduced in grade one so that students will be able to complete a full research paper by grade five.

Administrators and teachers in both Reading First and non-Reading First schools stated that their schools integrated reading across the curriculum. Many felt that the three-hour literacy requirement of Reading First necessitated reading in the other subject areas. In some Reading First schools, subject area teachers were trained to assist Reading First

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teachers whereas in other schools, subject area teachers integrated the Reading First strategies into their own classes.

Non Reading First schools that implemented Success for All trained all teachers in the reading process and actively involved them in teaching reading. Although most reading teachers reported that they had met and planned thematic units with the subject area teachers, some teachers reported that science and social studies were not fully addressed in their schools because of the amount of instructional time that had been set aside for teaching reading.

Parental Involvement. Reading First and non Reading First discussion group participants all agreed that, overall, parental involvement needs to be improved. Although school personnel reported encouraging parents to attend workshops and other events at the school, attendance usually tended to be low. In some cases, teachers reported that when incentives such as food and prizes were available, attendance increased. However, for the most part, participants reported that parents tended to be more involved in student's take home activities such as vocabulary lists, sight words on flash cards or reading together with their children each night.

Several teachers in the discussion groups (both Reading First and non Reading First) said that they kept parents involved in the reading process by requiring them to "sign off" that the student had completed home activities and/or that they reviewed materials and reports sent home. While most teachers reported sending home reading progress reports and telephoning parents to discuss student performance, some set up web pages with class news and information.

Many Reading First and non Reading First teachers were concerned that some parents lacked the necessary skills to help their children learn to read. A few teachers noted that they *" try to work around these parents and provide opportunities to assist them."* Some of the initiatives that schools implemented to increase parent involvement were:

- Family Reading Nights
- Literacy Partners (teaching parents how to help students with reading)
- America Reads (sponsored through a local university)
- VISTA volunteers
- Church volunteers
- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)
- Fathers Being Involved (FBI)

Teachers reported that some parents were learning along with their children because they had never had phonics instruction. Some parents even considered the phonics components to be the selling point of the reading program. Conversely, parents of students who struggled with reading thought the programs were too hard for their children.

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As part of this final evaluation, surveys were administered in the spring of 2001 to approximately 3,000 parents with students attending Reading First and non Reading First schools. Overall, the data show that Reading First and non Reading First parents participate in their child's school at approximately the same rate. For instance, Chart 12 shows the percentage of parents who work outside of the home and who belong to Parent-Teacher Association (PTA/PTO) at their child's school. These data suggest that there is very little difference between Reading First and non Reading First parents on these dimensions. Nearly seventy percent of parents work outside of the home and approximately sixty percent are members of the PTA or PTO.

Chart 12. Percentage of Reading First and non Reading First Parents Employed Outside of the Home and Belonging to Parent Groups

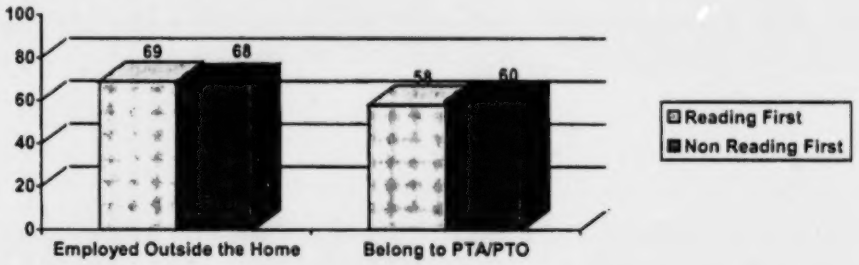

Chart 13 shows the percentage of parents who reported participation in school activities, volunteering at their child's school, and talking with the teacher regularly and receiving written communication (other than report cards) about their child's academic progress. Again, these data show little difference between Reading First and non Reading First parents. The vast majority of parents indicated that they participate in school activities (92%) and talk with their child's teacher (96% and 98%, respectively). Over seventy percent of parents reported that they volunteer in their child's school, with Reading First parents indicating that they had slightly higher rates of volunteerism (73% vs. 71%). Compared to Reading First parents, a larger percentage of non Reading First parents said that they received written communication (80% vs. 73%) from their child's teacher about his/her academic progress.

Chart 13. Percentage of Reading First and non Reading First Parents Involved in their Child's School

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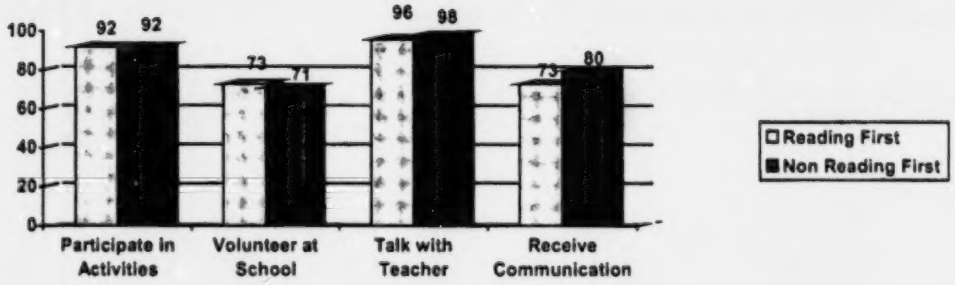

On the surveys, parents were also asked about the types of educational activities they engaged in at home. Using a five-point scale, parents were asked to indicate how often (e.g.; 1=less than once a month, 5= almost every day) they engaged in activities that enhanced their child's education. Table 6 contains the average response (using the five point scale) of parents on reading related activities. These data also show that there was very little difference in the responses of Reading First and non Reading First parents on the dimensions measured. For the most part, both Reading First and non Reading First parents indicated that they spend at least one day each week (rating > 4) on each of the listed activities. Parents spent the most time talking with their child about what s/he is learning in school, listening to their child read or attempt to read, and checking or providing help with homework. Admittedly, parents only visited the library and brought home reading materials one time per month or less.

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Table 6. Comparison of Parents' Average Ratings for Participation in Educational Activities at Home

How often do you…	*Reading First*	*Non Reading First*
talk with your child about what s/he is learning	4.8	4.8
read aloud to child	4.0	4.2
listen to your child read or attempt to read	4.5	4.5
help or encourage child to write	4.4	4.4
check or provide help with homework	4.7	4.8
Child tries to read on his or her own	4.6	4.6
talk with your child about a book s/he is reading	4.4	4.5
visit the library with your child	2.4	2.5
bring home books or other reading materials for your child	2.9	3.0

Table 7 below shows the percentage of parents that engage in specific activities geared towards helping their child to read. These data show that across grade levels. most Reading First and non Reading First parents helped their child by sounding out words, listening to him or her read, and identifying words. In almost all cases, a larger percentage of non Reading First parents spent time on these activities than Reading First parents did (except for second grade where a larger percentage of Reading First parents listened to their child read). It may be that given the heavy emphasis on these activities at Reading First schools, slightly fewer parents felt like their child needed these types of assistance.

Table 7. Percentage of Parents Providing Reading Assistance by Grade

	1st Grade		2nd Grade		3rd Grade	
	Reading 1st	Non Reading 1st	Reading 1st	Non Reading 1st	Reading 1st	Non Reading 1st
Identify words	60%	68%	56%	56%	59%	62%
Help with sounding out words	81%	83%	69%	75%	64%	65%
Tell letter names	19%	24%	12%	17%	12%	13%
Tell sounds of letters	36%	46%	26%	38%	22%	25%
Listen to him/her read	74%	84%	83%	78%	78%	79%

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Overall, parents reported that they engaged in activities that were supportive of the reading programs employed in their child's school. Although teachers and administrators felt that parental involvement was low overall, they did indicate that parents were more likely to participate in activities at home than at school. The survey data support this notion. Parental involvement has consistently been an issue of concern to schools. Parents, administrators, and teachers would benefit from working cooperatively to better meet student's needs.

Staff Development. When asked about staff development opportunities, Reading First teachers admitted that they were generally satisfied with the training and support they received as part of the program Most stated that they were *shown how to effectively organize reading instruction across grade levels, how to use the BLT and LEXIA to assess student needs, and how to teach phonics and reading comprehension.* While many Reading First teachers thought the 50-hour training requirement for the first year was appropriate, they also felt the 30-hour requirement for subsequent years was "overkill." For example, some teachers thought that *state trainers need to come from the "classroom" instead of the office and that training would be more effective if it were more "hands-on."* Many teachers also agreed that "*teachers need to learn different reading strategies for students in grades three through five,* and that *the Reading First program should incorporate more writing across the curriculum."* Finally, most Reading first teachers agreed that many new teachers have had no training in teaching reading and, therefore, that the Reading First training can be overwhelming.

Teachers at non Reading First schools, specifically those that implemented the Literacy Collaborative, Success for All and Reading Recovery programs, expressed an overall satisfaction with their training and support services. However, they were concerned that staff training was typically a one-day session on "everything", trainers were often not qualified or merely read notes, and that there was no release time for the training.

Administrators across the board shared the teachers' concern that new teachers often did not know how to teach reading. For instance, one administrator stated that, *"many teachers do not know how to teach comprehension in Grades K-5."* As a remedy, the administrators recommended that each school acquires a literacy trainer who can provide ongoing support and training. Administrators at Reading First and non Reading First schools also believed that "*all teachers could benefit from additional training in student assessment; technology for instruction, writing, phonics."*

Indicators of Academic Success. Both Reading First and non-Reading First teachers thought that their respective reading programs were very effective. They noted that students were reading earlier, they were more excited about reading, and parents were generally pleased with the progress of their children. They also observed students reading more in class. In terms of assessing students' progress, both Reading First and non Reading First teachers admitted that they administered self-developed reading inventories and collected writing samples from students. While Reading First teachers relied more heavily on the BLT to assess reading progress, some non Reading First teachers reported

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that they used the GKAP, ITBS, SAT-9, Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), STAR Assessment for Accelerated Reader and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to monitor student's progress. Teachers and administrators across both groups also agreed that the CRCT would be a more accurate assessment of reading progress than the norm-referenced tests.

Teachers and administrators in both groups also reported that more students were excited about reading. As one teacher put it, *"the more they read, the more they enjoy it."* However, some teachers were concerned that a few students could not identify with the content of classroom reading materials. This was especially true for ESOL students, who often did not experience the same level of success with reading as their non-ESOL classmates.

Changes in Reading First and Other Reading Programs Over the Three-Year Period. Overall, teachers and administrators reported that there had been few changes in their reading programs over the past years. However, Reading First teachers noted that the biggest differences from year one of the program to the present were changes in attitude about teaching reading. Reading First teachers reported that they were *"more confident about teaching reading as a result of working with Reading First, and were more comfortable implementing components of the program such phonics instruction, BLT assessment, and literacy centers."* Participants from both Reading First and non Reading First schools expressed concern that paraprofessionals were no longer available to assist many classroom teachers.

Future Plans for Reading. Almost all of the Reading First teachers thought their schools would continue the program in or near its original form during the next school year. A few teachers indicated that their schools had planned to acquire more appropriate materials for students in grades four and five. Teachers from one district stated that their system was switching to Success for All in the 2002-2003 school year as part of a district-wide school reform initiative. Nearly all of the non-Reading First teachers reported that they would most likely continue with the programs they had during the next school year without any major changes.

Many administrators in both groups expressed frustration that they did not know what the state's plans were for funding reading programs in the upcoming school year. Some administrators noted the need for more research about which reading programs really worked and under what conditions they were most useful. Most of them, however, indicated they had planned to continue with their existing reading program.

Even though Reading First and non Reading First teachers thought they would continue with their existing reading programs and generally agreed that their programs adequately met the needs of their students, there were still some concerns. For instance, both Reading First and non-Reading First teachers thought their programs worked well for average students but did not serve the "lowest" and "highest" students very well.

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Teachers also expressed concern that neither Reading First or other reading programs being used adequately met the needs of ESOL students.

Recommendations for Improvement. Most of the participants in the Reading First and non Reading First discussion groups offered recommendations that they believe would improve reading in Georgia. The recommendations centered mainly on funding, evaluation of existing reading programs, student assessment, continuity across the curriculum, staff development, and parent involvement. The recommended areas of improvement have been identified throughout this part of the report and are summarized below:

- Increase state and local funding to support reading instruction in all schools
- Use curriculum based assessment tools for determining student progress
- Use both state tests and school based indicators of success to determine the effectiveness of reading programs
- Improve the continuity of reading programs across grade levels
- Increased focus on instruction in writing
- Provide more staff development and ongoing support in the school
- Provide more training and support in reading instruction for all new teachers
- Reduce class size and/or add paraprofessional assistance to allow for more small group or individual instruction
- Align instruction with state QCC, district requirements
- Address the special needs of ESOL students and students with learning disabilities
- Increase parent involvement

Reading First staff also recommended that the following issues be specifically addressed to improve the Reading First program:

- Expand the approved list of materials and resources for Reading First funds
- Expand the Reading First program and staff development opportunities to grades four and five
- Revise the BLT
- Provide additional staff development related to administration and scoring of the BLT and its use in planning for instruction
- Improve of state-level training and the re-delivery system for Reading First training at the local level

Summary on Implementation

The implementation data colleted in this evaluation show that Reading First and non Reading First teachers are share similar philosophies towards teaching reading, classroom instructional practices and concerns about parent involvement and staff

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development. The data presented here suggest that the components of the Reading First program are included in other reading initiatives and are widely endorsed by non Reading First schools. Teachers, administrators and parents alike are all committed to providing quality reading instruction, and supporting the instruction that best meets students' needs.

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Part IV: Summary and Conclusions

The results from the final evaluation of the Reading First program support the findings from previous years and the continued use of the Reading First program. The data from all three of the standardized tests used to assess student achievement (ITBS, CRCT, SAT-9) support one another. The achievement data suggest that the Reading First program is most beneficial for first graders and low achieving second and third grade students. There is no evidence that the program significantly affects the achievement of high achieving second and third graders. It is too soon to measure the effect of the comprehension module that was developed and implemented during the 2000-01 school year to better address the needs of second and third grade students.

The discussion group and survey data showed that Reading First and non Reading First teachers and administrators share similar philosophies towards teaching reading and employ similar instructional techniques in the classroom. Both Reading First and non Reading First parents report engaging in activities that clearly support reading in general, and, Reading First, in particular.

In terms of program improvement, several themes emerged among Reading First and non Reading First staff. The main areas of concern are regarding continued funding, improved staff development and continuity across the curriculum. Addressing the aforementioned needs could further enhance the Reading First program as well as other reading programs being used in Georgia's elementary schools.

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Appendix A

Reading First Guidelines 2000-2001

I. ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A. Establish an advisory committee consisting of:
   1. Principal – Chair
   2. Teacher representatives from all grades in the school
   3. Representatives from special education, ESOL, Title I, and EIP
   4. Media specialist
   5. Central Office leadership
   6. Parent volunteer and/or community leader
   7. RESA consultants and Field Service Director (if possible)

B. Convene a minimum of two advisory committee meetings during the year.

II. READING INSTRUCTION

A. Focus on reading instruction for at least three hours each day in grades K-3. The three hours will be divided to include instruction using:
   1. Direct, systematic, explicit phonics (Only an approved phonics program may be used. Refer to the Reading First Instructional Materials List.)
   2. Quality literature (Basal reading programs with quality literature would meet this requirement.)
   3. High frequency sight vocabulary (Refer to the Reading First Instructional Materials List for material that may be used for instruction in high frequency sight vocabulary.)
   4. Teaching reading within the content areas which may include thematic teaching of reading addressing the QCC requirements at each grade level
   5. Reading comprehension strategies from the summer training and the Comprehension Manual should be incorporated in each of the above.

B. Students will read at least 25 books during the year. A computer program should be used to assist teachers in monitoring this reading.

III. READING TUTORS

A. All certified staff in the school not teaching reading will select one child and provide one-on-one tutoring in reading for 15-30 minutes twice a week.

B. Parents and community volunteers are encouraged to participate in weekly tutoring sessions and staff development training.

IV. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. All personnel involved in the Reading First project will complete 30 hours of staff development during the school year. The majority of these hours should focus on the improvement of instruction to enhance reading comprehension.

B. The Advisory Committee will participate in planning redelivery of Reading First comprehension information to be done by the school representatives who were trained during the summer training session.

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C. The 30 hours of staff development may include:
   1. Formal redelivery by the school representatives trained during the summer using videos, transparencies or Power Point presentations provided by the DOE
   2. Ongoing weekly and/or monthly grade-level or whole-faculty meetings for the development and implementation of strategies
   3. Training provided by publishers for new materials
   4. Study groups convened for evaluating current practices in light of new research
D. Schools will provide a Reading First Comprehension Manual for all staff participating in the project. This manual may be copied in the school or district office.
E. Grant funds may be used for teacher stipends for off-contract work time, not to exceed $4,000.

V. ASSESSMENT

A. The Basic Literacy Test will be individually administered to students in grades K-3 by teachers in Reading First schools during the fall, winter and spring. The Basic Literacy Test assesses decoding skills, sight words, and reading comprehension. Every student participating in the project must be assessed. (Students assessed the previous spring are exempt from fall assessment.)
B. In order to complete the longitudinal study begun in 1998-1999, schools participating in the Reading First Project at that time are required to assess all students in the first, second, and third grades with the Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension portions of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. This will be in addition to mandatory testing in third grade with the Stanford 9.
C. The ITBS is not required for kindergarten students, however, if a school chooses to administer the ITBS in kindergarten, Reading First funds may be used to purchase test materials.

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Appendix B Survey Instruments and Discussion Group Protocols

Parent Survey

Spring, 2001

The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) is in the process of learning about reading programs in the elementary schools. We recognize the importance of parental involvement in education and ask that you complete the following survey. Your answers will provide valuable information about the types of activities you participate in with your child and the degree to which you are satisfied with your school's reading program. Your answers will remain anonymous—do not write your name on this survey. You may fill in your responses in pencil or pen. For your convenience, we have provided a self-addressed stamped envelope. Please return your survey to: Dr. Valerie Roberts, Georgia Department of Education, 1754 Twin Towers East, Atlanta, GA 30334 by June 30, 2001. **If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Valerie Roberts at (404) 656-2668 or via email at vroberts@doe.k12.ga.us.**

	K	1	2	3
1. What is your child's grade level? *(If you have more than one child in grades K through 3, please fill out this survey for only one child.)*	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Yes	No
2 Are you employed outside the home?	☐	☐
3. Do you belong to a parent group (for example, PTA or PTO) at your child's school?	☐	☐

The following questions ask you to indicate the extent to which you participate at your child's school and communicate with teachers about your child's education. Please respond by marking 'yes' or 'no' in the boxes to the right. If you answer 'yes' to any of the questions, please indicate how often these activities occur by marking the boxes to the far right.	**Yes**	**No**	**How often does this occur? *Please respond below only for the questions to which you answered 'yes'***				
			Once a year	**Once every few months**	**Once a month**	**At least once a week**	**Every day**
4. Do you volunteer at your child's school?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Do you participate in or attend activities at your child's school?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Do you talk with your child's teacher about his or her academic progress?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Do you receive written communication (other than report cards or deficiency reports) from your child's teacher about his or her academic progress?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please tell us how often you participate in the following activities with your child.	**Less than once a month**	**Once a month**	**Several times a month**	**Once a week**	**Almost every day**
8. How often do you and your child talk about what s/he is learning in school?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. How often do you read aloud to your child?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. How often do you listen to your child read or attempt to read?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. How often do you help or encourage your child to write or attempt to write?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. How often is your child assigned homework?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. How often do you check your child's homework or provide help with homework?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. How often does your child try to read (i.e.; books, magazines, newspapers etc.) on his or her own?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. How often do you talk with your child about books s/he is reading?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. How often do you visit the library with your child?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. How often do you bring home books or other reading materials for your child?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Identify words	**Help with sounding out words**	**Tell letter names**	**Tell sounds of letters**	**Listen to him/her read**
18. When you help your child read, what kind of help do you usually give? ***Please mark all that apply***	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Very dissatisfied	**Somewhat dissatisfied**	**Somewhat satisfied**	**Very satisfied**
19. How satisfied are you with the reading program at your child's school?	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. How satisfied are you with your child's progress in learning to read?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reading First Teacher Survey
Spring, 2001

The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) is completing the final year of the statewide evaluation of the Reading First program. This survey is an important part of the evaluation. Your participation is critical to the GDOE's efforts to learn about the Reading First program. Your answers will provide valuable information concerning your beliefs about teaching reading, classroom instructional practices and the Reading First program components. Your answers will remain anonymous—do not write your name on this survey. You may fill in your responses in pencil or pen. To maintain your privacy, please place the survey in the enclosed envelope and return it to your school's main office by May 18, 2001. **If you would prefer to return your survey directly to the GDOE, please mail it to: Dr. Valerie Roberts, Georgia Department of Education, 1754 Twin Towers East, Atlanta, GA 30334.** If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Valerie Roberts at (404) 657-6168 or via email at vroberts@doe.k12.ga.us.

Please tell us about yourself.

1. Which grade is your main teaching assignment? ☐ K ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. Which of the following are taught in your classroom during reading (please mark all that apply)?
☐ REP (Remedial Education Program) ☐ EIP (Early Intervention Program) ☐ Title I
3. Did you teach in grades K-3 at this school last year? ☐ Y ☐ N
4. How many years have you taught in grades K-3? ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐ 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15 ☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 ☐ 19 ☐ 20 ☐ 20+

Instructions: Using the scale to the right, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

5. Please tell us about your beliefs about teaching reading.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A child needs to be able to verbalize the rules of phonics in order to assure proficiency in processing new words.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dividing words into syllables according to rules is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicates good comprehension.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words, and sentences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When children do not know a word, they should be instructed to sound out its parts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reversals (e.g., saying "saw" for "was") are significant problems in the teaching of reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to ensure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understanding story content.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When coming to a word that's unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess the meaning and go on.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of a word (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flashcard drills with sight words is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to use accent pattern in multi-syllable words (pho'to graph, photo'gra phy, and pho to gra' phic) should be developed as part of reading instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Controlling text through consistent spelling patterns (The fat cat ran back. The fat cat sat on a hat.) is a means by which children can best learn to read.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional ending from words (e.g., jumps, jumped).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Please tell us about your teaching style and your school's reading program.	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
I make a special effort to give my students work that is creative and imaginative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I display the work of the highest achieving students as an example.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I stress to students that I want them to understand the work, not just memorize it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I give special privileges to students who do the best academically.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I frequently tell my students that I want them to enjoy learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I help students understand how their performance compares to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I make a special effort to give my students work that has meaning in their everyday lives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I point out those children who do well academically, as a model for other students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I encourage students to compete with each other academically.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Computers are an essential tool in teaching reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Phonics should be taught every year in grades K-3.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Teaching reading in science and social studies improves learning in those areas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching phonics is a main goal of Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching sight words is a main goal of Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increasing reading comprehension is a main goal of Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using the computer to reinforce reading is a main goal of Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I spend more time teaching phonics than I did before Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Good reading instruction requires grouping students by ability level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Under Reading First, I have less time to teach writing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Under Reading First, I have less time to teach math.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading First isn't too different from how I've always taught.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most K-3 teachers at my school have low expectations for student academic achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The principal at my school believes in and supports Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most teachers at my school believe in and support Reading First.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computers are necessary to teach grammar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computers are necessary to teach spelling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computers are necessary to teach writing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I give students homework assignments that reinforce reading strategies they learn in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The BLT is a good tool for assessing my students' reading ability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The ITBS is a good tool for assessing my students' reading ability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Please tell us about how your reading classes are structured.	**0-20 min**	**21-40 min**	**41-60 min**	**61-80 min**	**80+ min**
On average, how many minutes each DAY do you teach phonics?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On average, how many minutes each DAY do you teach sight words?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On average, how many minutes each DAY do you combine reading and science?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On average, how many minutes each DAY do you combine reading and social studies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On average, how many minutes each DAY do you provide reading instruction in a small group?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On average, how many minutes each WEEK does each of your students spend using the computer to reinforce reading skills?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On average, how many minutes each WEEK do you use the computer to manage reading instruction?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Please indicate the frequency in which the following occur:	**Almost every day**	**Once or twice a week**	**Once or twice a month**	**Once or twice a semester**	**Less than once or twice a semester**
How often do you assess your students' reading levels?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often do your flexible groups change?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Study Questions

Reading First Discussion Groups

April - May 2001

Note: These are generic questions that can be compared across groups. Where "reading program" is used, the term "Reading First" will be used for the Reading First groups.

1. What is your philosophy of teaching reading to primary level students?

2. Describe the reading program used in Grades K-3 in your school/district.
   Reading First
   Other **(Refer to reading programs included on survey)**

   a) Why did your school/district decide to implement the Reading First Program? Has the Reading First Program met your expectations? Why or why not?

   b) Why did your school/district decide not to implement the Reading First Program?

3. How is the reading program implemented in your school/district? Request the following information for each program used in the school/district:
   Instructional practices
   Teaching techniques
   Strategies
   Organization
   Schedule/Time Spent on Reading
   Materials

   a) How does reading instruction differ by grade level?

   b) Is reading instruction integrated with instruction in other subject areas? If so, in what way?

   c) How are computers used for reading instruction?

   d) How are parents involved in the reading program?

   e) Do you have an advisory committee for the reading program? What is its role? How does the advisory committee influence the reading program?

   f) What staff development has been provided to reading teachers in your school? How satisfied are teachers with these activities? Do you have additional training needs? Please specify.

4. What is the greatest strength of your reading program?
   a) What are the most effective instructional practices used?
   b) What are the most effective instructional materials used?

   (What do you like about the Reading First Program curriculum and materials? What don't you like?)

5. How effective do you believe your current reading program is? Why?

    a) What indicators does the school/district use to assess the reading program?
    b) Student achievement (standardized tests norm-referenced/criterion-referenced; district-level; teacher; performance-based)
    c) Other assessment indicators (student attitude, behavior, motivation, teacher reactions, parent reactions)

6. How do you think each of the following groups views your current reading program?
    - Students
    - Parents
    - Teachers
    - Administrators

7. How has your reading program (implementation, operation, curriculum, materials, etc.) changed over the past two school years? Why were the changes made?

8. Will the school/district continue using the same reading program during the next school year? Why or why not? (Is change planned for your reading program for the next school year (2001-2002)?) Please describe the planned changes. Why are these changes being made? **(Refer to reading programs included on survey)**

9. How well does the current reading program meet student needs? What student needs are not being met by the current reading program?

10. How would you change/improve your reading program? Please cite specific recommendations for improvements needed.

11. What other concerns do you have about Reading First or your reading program that we have not covered today in our discussion?

GEORGIA READING FIRST PROGRAM DISCUSSION GROUP PROJECT

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP MEETING
April-May 2001
Survey of Reading Programs in School/District

Date: **Time:** **Location:**

Focus group discussion participants are requested to complete pages one and two of this survey. Please use the back of the survey for additional comments. Thank you!

Position	School	District	Grade Level	Subject	# Years at School	# Years Reading First

Reading Program	Used in past two years?	If "Yes", what was most effective about program?	Plan to use next school year?	If "Yes", why do you plan to implement program?
Reading First-Initial				
Reading First-Continuing				
Reading Recovery				
Reading Rescue				

Form for Teachers

Reading Program	Used in past two years?	If "Yes", what was most effective about program?	Plan to use next school year?	If "Yes", why do you plan to implement program?
Literacy Collaborative				
Patricia Cunningham Four Block Method				
Animated Literacy				
Success for All				
Universal Literacy Voyager				
SRA Direct Instruction				
Carbo Reading Styles				

Form for Teachers

GEORGIA READING FIRST PROGRAM DISCUSSION GROUP PROJECT

ADMINISTRATOR FOCUS GROUP MEETING
April-May 2001
Survey of Reading Programs in School/District

Date: **Time** **Location:**

Focus group discussion participants are requested to complete pages one and two of this survey. Please use the back of the survey for additional comments. Thank you!

Position	School	District	# Years at School / District	# Years Reading First

Reading Program	Used in past two years?	If "Yes", what was most effective about program?	Plan to use next school year?	If "Yes", why do you plan to implement program?
Reading First-Initial				
Reading First-Continuing				
Reading Recovery				
Reading Rescue				
Reading Program	Used in past two years?	If "Yes", what was most effective about program?	Plan to use next school year?	If "Yes", why do you plan to implement program?

Literacy Collaborative				
Patricia Cunningham Four Block Method				
Animated Literacy				
Success for All				
Universal Literacy Voyager				
SRA Direct Instruction				
Carbo Reading Styles				

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